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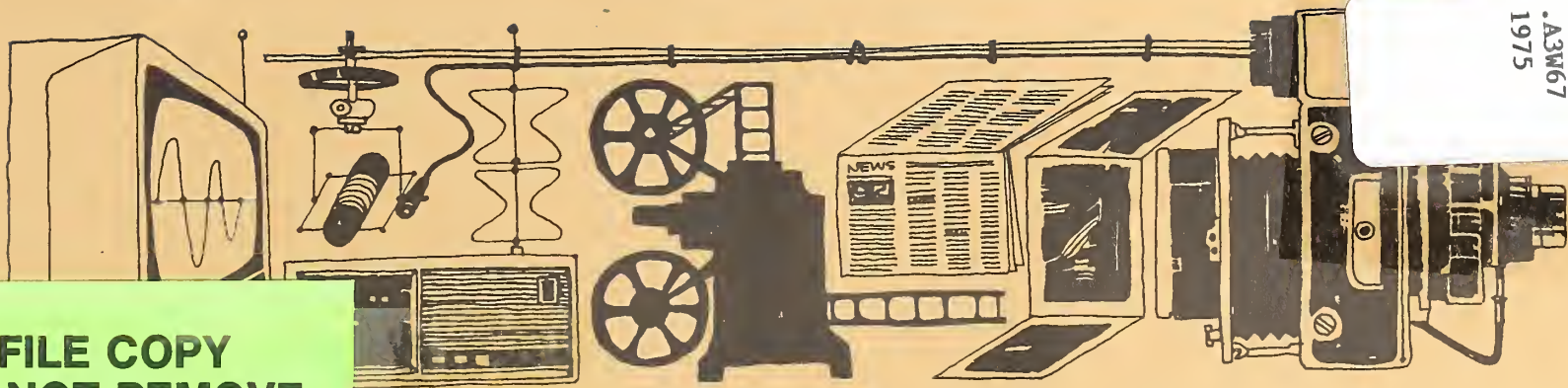
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WORDS-PICTURES-SOUND

**A GUIDE
TO WORKING WITH
PRESS, TELEVISION
AND RADIO**





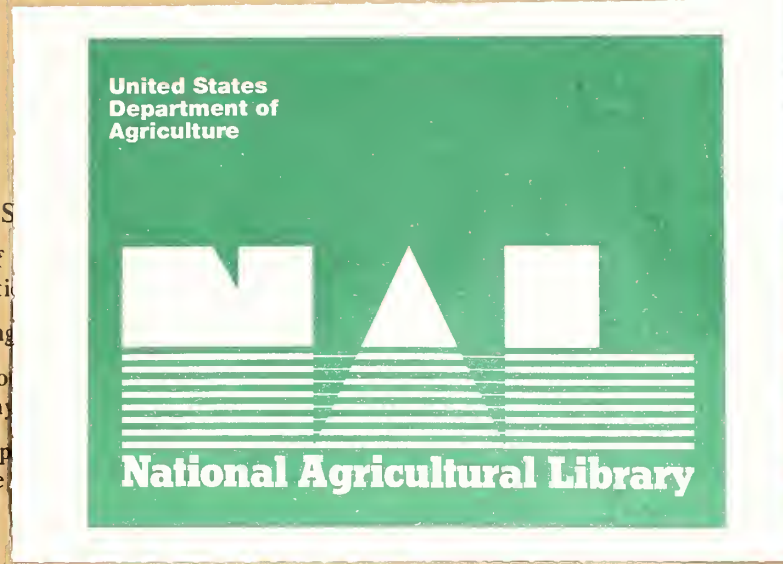
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GET TO KNOW NEWS PEOPLE

There's nothing that beats personal contact as a means of getting to know and understand someone else. Especially someone with whom you will be working in your efforts to tell the Forest Service story. So, the first step is to get to know the news people in your area and let them know you and what you do.

Visit them and tell them about the National Forests and the type of news you can furnish them. News is their business and carrying news about their areas is what brings in advertisers and keeps the news people in business. Most people had rather hear or read about something their neighbor does than about something that's happening to people they don't know. And National Forest activities often involve things that are interesting to the community.

Every Ranger doesn't think the same as all other Rangers and neither do all news people think alike. Some like to go get the news personally. Others like to have it telephoned or mailed to them and still others may want someone to bring it to them. Your personal visits will help you find out how to get the news to the various media.

Be sure to time your visits so you don't catch news people at their busiest time. A news official at deadline is much like a forester fighting a big fire — he's got his hands full and no time for small talk with outsiders.



Here are the rules

WHEN TO VISIT?

But how will you know what's the best time, especially for the first visit?

There are some general rules. Visit the weekly newspaper the day after it is published. For a daily newspaper that is delivered to homes in the morning, the best time to visit is during the late morning or early afternoon. Visit an afternoon daily newspaper late in the afternoon — after the final edition has gone to press. Radio and television usually have their heaviest newscast periods around noon and at 5 or 6 in the afternoon. So avoid these periods.

One swallow doesn't make a summer and one visit doesn't make permanent cooperation. After your first visit, stop by occasionally just to say hello . . . or mention something that may be coming up in the near future that might interest the newsman. Invite the news people on show-me trips to let them see what is being done and why it's being done. They can keep up with the changes and improvements themselves on these trips. And they'll have a better knowledge of just what you're talking about when you give them a news release.



HOW DO YOU KNOW WHICH NEWS PEOPLE TO CONTACT?

On weekly newspapers, it's usually no problem as to which person to contact since the editor often does most of the reporting also. But on newspapers with large staffs, it's another matter.

The editor always is a good man to know since he usually is responsible for the policy of the paper and the editorials reflecting that policy. The reporters report the news and the editor interprets that news in his editorials. He sets the policy.

You should have more than one contact at each newspaper. Many papers now have writers who specialize in conservation or environmental articles. This is a good person to know. The sports or outdoor writer is interested in the outdoors so you should know him. Feature writers also are good contacts as they are always looking for articles that are different.

For radio and television, the station manager always is a good contact. The news director is another person to know and at television stations, the assignment editor. The public service or public affairs director can be a big help.

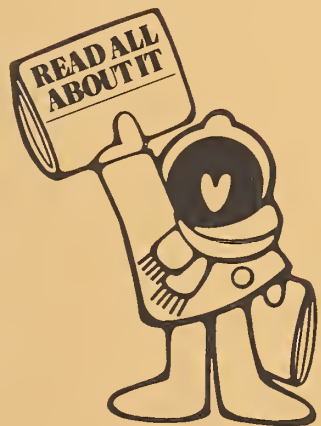
It's important to have good relations with the news media because the best news item in the world is of little use if it doesn't get printed or broadcast.



WHAT IS NEWS?

The simplest definition is that news is information . . . that is new and interesting. Forest Service activities that can be classed as news are those that are interesting to people outside the Service. A few examples are — fires, building or expanding recreation areas, roadbuilding, personnel changes, hunting and fishing items, insect and disease outbreaks, timber sales, fall color and spring flower seasons with tour suggestions.

In trying to decide whether a particular activity is newsworthy, ask yourself if other people would want to know about it. If the answer is yes, then it's worth a news item.



TYPES OF NEWS

There are two types of news stories — straight news and feature news.

Straight news is news in which the time element is important. It's an item that is newsworthy now but won't be a week from now. Straight news could be called instant news. A forest fire, a plane crash, the transfer of a Supervisor, the opening of contract bids, a dedication — these are typical of straight news.

Feature news is news in which the time element is not necessarily important and it's news that has human interest or some unusual feature to it. A feature story could be an item on a dog that picks up litter, or the campers who traveled the longest distance to camp. Feature news is something that will be interesting whether it's read today or next week. When it happened is not as important as the description of what happened.

WRITING THE NEWS

The news profession has its well know W's—points which should be in every news article in order to tell the complete story. These are: who, what, when, where, why and how. If these are in each item, the basic facts will be covered.

The first paragraph, or lead, of a news story is the most important part because it is the paragraph which must tell the reader enough to make him want to read the rest of the article. The W's should be in the lead of a straight news story.

A couple of examples:

John Jones shot his wife with a pistol today at a drive-in because, he said, she'd been running around on him.

Who—John Jones; What, shot his wife; When, today; Where, at a drive-in; How, with a pistol; Why, she'd been running around.

— 0 —

The U. S. Forest Service bought 500 acres of land today for a new Georgia recreation complex, using money from the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

Who, Forest Service; What, bought 500 acres of land; When, today; Where, North Georgia; How, with Land and Water Conservation Fund money; Why, new recreation complex.

HOW TO WRITE A LEAD

Writing a lead for your item is not as hard as it may seem. Get all your facts together and look them over. Decide which is the most important fact, the reason you think it's worth a news item in the first place. Make this your lead. Writing a lead is simply putting on paper what you think is the most important thing about the story. Just put down the most important fact, then answer the obvious questions. The most important fact in our first example is that John Jones shot his wife but that by itself would not tell the story. So we answer the obvious question — when, where, why and how. The same is true in the second example — the buying of the land is most important. Then, we tell the rest of the W's.

The lead paragraph gives the so-called “guts” of the story but it leaves some questions unanswered. These must be answered in succeeding paragraphs. For instance, the land buying story lead doesn't answer such questions as to the exact location, when work will begin, how big the recreation complex will be, how much was paid for the land, when the recreation area will be opened. This is information that can be put after the lead paragraph.

Put the second most important fact in the second paragraph and continue putting the additional information down in descending order of importance. There's a reason for this — when a newspaper shortens a news item, the cutting out starts at the bottom paragraph and works up. Saving vital information for the last few paragraphs can mean that it gets eliminated.

You have really written a good story from a newspaper standpoint if everything but the first two paragraphs can be cut and the reader still gets the essential details.



WHAT ABOUT RADIO AND TELEVISION?



The same facts are used in writing for radio and television but the presentation is slightly different. Radio and television news broadcasts are written for the ear, while newspapers are written for the eye. If you don't quite understand something in a newspaper you can go back and read it again. But once you hear it on radio or television, you can't get a replay to make sure you understand.

In order to get better understanding of an item, radio and TV writers do what they refer to as "easing" into the item. Seldom do they make the first sentence a recitation of facts and figures. Instead, many times, it is almost a casual approach to the item. There are two reasons for this. First, many people let their attention wander and miss the first few words of an item, then "tune in" for the rest. Second, a long sentence of facts and figures is too much of a mouthful for an announcer and that makes it hard for the listener to get the main points.

Another difference is that radio and television seek to get a sense of immediacy into their news, so the listener gets the idea the event has just happened. Newspapers use the past tense quite often for a good reason. An item that is written at 8 in the morning may not be read until 5 in the afternoon. Or an item that is prepared at 8 in the evening may not be read until 7 the next morning. So they rely heavily on the past and future tenses although this has gradually been changing in some newspapers.

Also the average person will read only one edition of a newspaper but radio and TV stations have a number of newscasts each day, one an hour on some radio stations.

LET'S LOOK AT OUR EXAMPLES AND SEE HOW THEY WOULD CHANGE FOR BROADCAST NEWS

Instead of saying John Jones shot his wife, etc. the broadcast item would probably start out by saying, "There's been a fatal shooting at an Atlanta drive-in" . . . or possibly . . . "A man has shot his wife to death at an Atlanta drive-in". Then would come the identification and the other details.

Analyzing the broadcast item, we see that if the listener doesn't "tune in" until the fifth word he still gets the shooting in one version, his "wife to death" in the other. So, the item gets his full attention now and he still gets all the details because the actual facts come after the first sentence. If the item had started out the John Jones shot his wife way, the listener would have missed what happened if he didn't concentrate until after the fifth word.

The land purchase item might come out like this . . . "A federal agency has bought land in North Georgia to use for recreation purposes". Or, "A big tract of land in North Georgia has been sold to a federal agency". Here again, the facts themselves come after the first sentence.





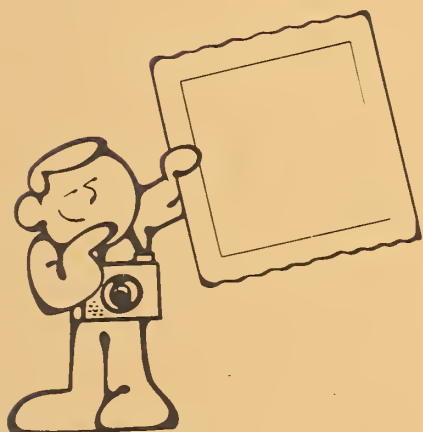
IMMEDIACY

Using the present tense in radio and television broadcasting gives the sense of immediacy. For this reason, broadcasters use “says” instead of “said” and avoid the past tense as much as possible. Where a newspaper might say so and so came to town today, the broadcast would say he “is” in town.

In broadcast news, an official with a lengthy title simply becomes a “federal official” or a “state official” in the beginning. His exact title is given later in the item.

You may never have to write your items in broadcast form because many stations now just want the basic facts and they tailor them to fit the broadcast times. But it never hurts to aim your item at the person you want to use it. Broadcasters complained for many years that most of the news items they got had originally been written for newspapers and were mailed to them in newspaper style.

In your contacts, check your broadcasters to see how they want their news and then give it to them the way they want it.



THINGS TO REMEMBER

No matter what type of news you are writing there are some things to remember.

- Use words that are easy to understand. The average person knows little about forestry so use words that will get your message over to him.
- Make your sentences short. Don’t overdo and make them all so short that the reader or listener gets a jerky feeling – but make them short enough so he doesn’t get lost by the time a sentence is finished.
- Keep your paragraphs short also. This makes for easier reading and listening and will attract more persons.
- Try to keep your news items about one page in length. This isn’t always possible but if you can do it, it will increase the chances of use. Also, if you aim for one page you aren’t as likely to over-write.
- Use statistics sparingly and dress them up when you can by making them seem a natural part of the item rather than running a long string of figures. You can use exact figures in one paragraph, round numbers in another for variety.
- If you are writing for newspapers, remember photos. Good photos can help make a news item. Often when they are pressed for space, editors will use a photo and caption and forget the longer story.



FORM

Use regular typewriter paper and always double space.

Use one side of the paper only. Editors use scissors to cut out parts of items and if there's somethings on the back, it's gone also.

Leave plenty of margin for editorial notes. Also room at the top for a headline for newspapers.

If it's for use at any time, mark it for "Immediate Release". If you want it released a certain day, mark it that way . . . "For Release in AM's Tuesday Jan. 6" for morning papers, "For Release in PM's Tuesday, Jan. 6" for afternoon papers. Put your organization name, mailing address and telephone number in upper corner on one side of paper. If you want to, include the name of a person as contact in case they need more information.

DO'S AND DON'TS

Don't ask newsmen to promise to publish or broadcast an item. Leave that decision up to them.

Don't ask them to let you review the article before it is used. They're professionals also. Sometimes if technical matters are involved they will ask you to check them for accuracy.

Don't get mad if some errors show up, unless you've never made a mistake yourself. Newsmen are human and can't be expected to become overnight experts on forestry. Any technical errors would not be noticed by the general public. Don't demand a correction. A correction only calls attention again to the original error. Instead, try to give them another item that will interest their readers and possibly clear up any misunderstanding. Use the positive approach.

Don't play favorites. Make sure all news media get any items you originate. If a newsman develops a story on his own, you don't have to give the same information to others unless they ask for it after the first item appears. But when you originate a general release, make sure everybody gets it at the same time.

Do be honest in your dealings with newsmen. If you don't know the answer to a question admit it and tell them you will try to get the answer. If you can't give out a particular piece of information, tell them that but add that you'll be sure to call them when you are able to release it. And don't forget to call.

Do learn deadlines and publication dates. By doing this you'll know when to get your news to them. There's nothing worse than taking a news item to a weekly newspaper just as the edition is rolling off the press . . . or walking into a broadcasting station with an item just as they finish their last newscast.



Forest Service
1720 Peachtree Rd. N.W. Room 809
Atlanta, Georgia
526-5191

Atlanta — Timber growth last year on National Forests in the South was three times greater than the amount harvested, Regional Forester F. Leroy Bond said today.

Bond said that timber harvested from National Forests in 13 Southern states for the fiscal year which ended last June 30 amounted to slightly more than one billion board feet.

At the same time, Bond said, the amount of timber growing in the forests increased by the equivalent of more than three billion board feet. This growth increase is enough to build about 200,000 average size homes, he added.

The "growing more than is being cut" trend is not a recent thing, Bond said, but has been going on for some time. Since 1961, the amount of standing timber on National Forests in the South has increased about 34 billion feet while harvests since 1961 have totaled 12.5 billion board feet.

Most of the South's National Forests were established in the 1930's and had been cut over, burned and riddled by insects and disease, Bond said, and these lands still have not been fully reforested.

Timber growing is just one of the functions of the National Forests, Bond pointed out. The Forests furnish recreation for millions of persons each year, provide a home and food for wildlife, water for cities and industry and, in some places, forage for livestock. Recreation visits last year amounted to about 20 million visitor days.

A visitor day equals 12 hours use.

SAMPLE NEWS ITEM FOR RADIO-TV

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Forest Service
1720 Peachtree Rd. N.W. Room 809
Atlanta, Georgia
526-5191

Atlanta — They're growing a lot more wood on National Forests in the South now . . . three times as much as is being harvested.

Regional Forester F. Leroy Bond says that during the past fiscal year, which ended last June 30th, timber harvested from Southern National Forests amounted to slightly more than one billion board feet. At the same time, the amount of growing timber increased the equivalent of more than three billion board feet.

There are 13 states in the Southern Region and Bond says the growth increase on National Forests in those states could build about 200 thousand average size homes.

And Bond says the growing more than is being cut trend is not new . . . it's been going on for some time. He says that since 1961 standing timber on the National Forests in the South has increased by 34 billion board feet. And that increase figure takes into account a total of 12 and one-half billion board feet harvested since 1961.

The National Forests do more than just furnish timber for harvesting, the Regional Forester adds. He says millions of people visit the Forests each year for recreation . . . the Forests provide home and food for wildlife . . . water for cities and industry and, in some places, forage for livestock.

THE MANY FACES OF TELEVISION

There are millions of television sets in the United States and it's estimated that more families have television than indoor plumbing. So, television is a near-perfect medium for reaching a large number of people at one time.

The average television station telecasts more than 7,000 hours a year and there's always a demand for material. This material can take several forms. Here are some of the opportunities for television exposure.

News. This can be straight news or features. It must be a subject that is timely and interesting and one that can be covered in a short period. Television runs by the clock and timing is important. News directors try to get as much news into a program as possible.

Since most Forests don't have the capabilities for doing their own filming and then turning the film over to a station, the best approach is to try to interest the news editor or assignment editor in covering your story. Limit each attempt to place an item on television to one topic such as opening of a new recreation area, dedication of a Wilderness, etc. An item that affects many people gets preference over one which affects only a few. Try to find items which are not specialized but will have an effect on many people.

Timing is important since your item must compete with others for a spot on the news show. And the weekend is a good time for getting news or features on television. The regular sources of news—city, county, state and federal government offices—are closed on weekends, legislatures and the Congress are usually in recess and local television stations are looking for items for their weekend shows.



WCSC 

WCIV-TV 

WOLO-TV
columbia 25

WFBC-TV 

Public Service Time. All television stations devote some time to what is known as public service. This is free time made available by the station for telecasting materials in the public interest. When stations reapply for their licenses to operate, the Federal Communications Commission takes a look at the amount of time they have devoted to public service. Here are some examples of such programming.

- Public Service programs. These usually appear during the early morning hours and many are agribusiness type programs. The audiences are not as great as those in "prime time" but these programs are ones that should not be overlooked. The program director or host or hostess of the program are persons to get to know if you seek time on these programs.
- Spot announcements. These are 20, 30, and 60 second announcements that appear between programs and segments of programs and sometimes between commercials. Most of these now are on 16 millimeter film but many stations will use slides and script. Get to know the public service director, or public affairs as some call it, of the station to find out what the possibilities are.
- Shared ID's. Television stations run their call letters many times during a day's programming. These flash on the screen for a few seconds to let viewers know which station they are watching. These are called ID's or identification spots. Many stations will use these as part of their public service by sharing them with an organization or by promoting a worthy cause. These can be used to promote forest fire prevention, give anti-litter messages or show scenic views of the Forest. The public service director is the person to see about shared ID's. These are slides which carry a message or identify an organization and which also contain the station's logotype (call letters).



TALK SHOWS. These can appear at just about any time of the day but most such shows are seen in the first half of the day. The names given the shows vary from state to state and city to city but the ingredients are much the same—a host or hostess, interviews, some news, weather and sports. A talk show that runs five days a week uses a lot of material. Some programs try to deal with specific subjects each day while others will make use of anything and anybody that might prove interesting to viewers.

There are any number of possibilities for Forest Service participation in such programs since each Forest has specialists who could discuss a great variety of topics. Watch the talk shows in your area and learn the type of material they use, the type persons they interview and the format. There are several persons at the station who can help get you a spot on the program. The public service director often acts as a “scout” for the talk show and the program director always has a say in what appears on the station. Watch the show “credits” and get the name of the producer. This person also can be a key contact. The “credits” appear on the screen either before the start of the program or at the end. The show host or hostess can help also.

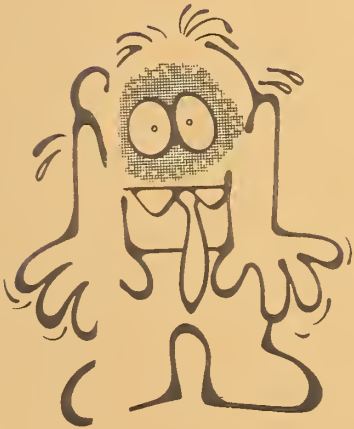
The talk shows usually have a long lead time, meaning programs are set up from three to six weeks before they are scheduled to run. So, don’t wait until the last minute to try to arrange some time. Slides or filmstrips can be used as visual aids on these programs. There are any number of subjects suitable for talk shows. A few are fall color tours, spring wildflowers, litter, fire prevention, recreation season, visual resource management, the many uses of wood, Forest planning and many others.

HELP! YOU’RE ON CAMERA. There are no magic formulas which quickly turn Forest Service folks into polished television performers. And you wouldn’t want that anyway. Forest Service people are natural resource managers and that’s the way others expect you to act. Viewers would be a bit suspicious of natural resource managers who were slick TV performers.

The first appearance on television usually is the toughest. Once the baptism is over, each succeeding appearance comes easier. A good interviewer usually will ask a guest to get to the station early, for a cup of coffee and a chat. This breaks the ice and gives the interviewer a chance to talk with you about the program. Some may ask that written questions be brought but most will just want to know what areas you’d like covered in the interview. If the interviewer is a real pro, you’ll likely realize about the time the program is over that you’ve been talking about the same things you discussed over coffee before air time. And it was easier the second time around.

There are some things to remember and consider when going before the television cameras.

—Try to be natural. This is not easy because the lights are hot and bright, the cameras are staring at you and there’s a lot of activity on the other side of the cameras. But do your best since naturalness helps make your message more believable.





- What about the cameras, look at them or not? This depends. If you are being interviewed, forget the cameras, if possible, and concentrate on the person asking the questions. You don't turn away from friends or others who ask you questions at the office or on the outside. Treat a television interviewer the same way. The people behind the cameras will see that they are always focused on the right person at the right time. If you and the camera are alone, however, look at the camera because that's where your audience is.
- Leave the notes at home. If you're not reading a prepared statement, it's best to leave the notes at home. Whatever you are trying to say will be lost on the audience if you have to refer to notes every time a question is asked.
- Use visuals. Television is a visual medium so make the best use possible of it. Slides, filmclips, posters, charts, publications etc. can be used to good effect. Make sure any charts or posters you use are colorful so they will show up well. Slides should be horizontal, not vertical. The folks at the station will take care of working the slides, or film clips, into the proper spot.

There are other "do's and don't's" about appearing on television but the best way to learn what to do is by doing it. Each time you appear before the cameras, you'll learn something that will help you the next time.

PUT
YOURSELF IN
OUR SHOES



RADIO. You could say radio is just television without the picture since many of the methods of operation are the same. Television just adds the sight to the sound.

The opportunities on radio are similar to those on television — news, feature, public service, interviews etc. One difference is that in some places, radio stations will turn a regular time slot over to a group or organization as part of its public service activities. This puts you on the other side of the fence with program ideas, guests etc. left up to you.

The format of radio makes it more adaptable to the use of local news, features and the like than television. The timing is not quite as critical as with television so a 30 second or one minute TV feature might be worth two or three minutes on radio.

The people to know at a radio station are the station manager, program director and news director. Working with these, you can take advantage of any opportunities the station has for use of your broadcast material.

The news media are there. The rest is up to you.



“USE THE PRESS FIRST, LAST, AND ALL THE TIME IF YOU WANT TO REACH THE PUBLIC.”

Gifford Pinchot in his precepts for foresters in public office.



U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE FOREST SERVICE SOUTHERN REGION